

KENNETH W. MARTIN

An Interview Conducted by  
William B. Pickett  
June 8, 1981

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"WORKS OF REFERENCE"

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Kenneth W Martin, born March 14, 1909, in Terre Haute, Indiana, 5th son of Frank J Martin, Founder of Martins Photo Shop.

Attended State Normal High School and some classes at Indiana State Teachers College.

Entered Professional Photography at Martins Photo Shop part time in 1924 and full time in 1928. Became partner in that firm in 1935, later became sole owner, and continued until 1975.

Worked in various areas of Professional Photography, but primarily in Commercial, Industrial, and Press.

Has made travelogs on, and lectured on areas of the United States, Canada, Alaska, Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Membership in Civic Clubs:

Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce, Optimist Club, Toastmasters.

Membership in Professional Organizations:

Wabash Valley Press Club, Charter Member, Vice President.

Advertising Club of Terre Haute, Charter Member, Past President, Honorary Life Member, Recipient of Honorary Tall Sycamore Award.

Indiana Press Photographers.

Professional Photographers of Indiana, Past President, Honorary Life Member.

Daguerre Club of Indiana, Past President, Honorary Life Member.

National Press Photographers, Honorary Life Member, Recipient, the Burt Williams Award for forty Years Service in Press Photography.

Professional Photographers of America, Indiana Deligate to National Council, Honorary Life Member, Recipient, National Award for Service to Professional Photography.

American Advertising Federation, Recipient, Silver Medal for Service in the Field of Advertising and Publications.

Elected to Membership, American Society of Photographers.

N.B. For additional information, see Terre Haute and Her People of Progress, 1970, "Ken W. Martin," pp. 147, 260. (Vigo County Public Library Special Collections)

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KENNETH W. MARTIN

Tape 1

June 8, 1981

Conference Room, Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, IN

INTERVIEWER: William B. Pickett

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

VCPL 1341

WBP: This is June 8, 1981. I'm William Pickett, and I'm interviewing Kenneth W. Martin today in the conference room of the Vigo County Public Library. Kenneth Martin has, as indicated in the biographical material, spent his life in Terre Haute in the photography profession. In fact, he was in his father's photography shop from 1924 until the shop closed in 1975.

Mr. Martin, were you born in Terre Haute?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: And you spent your early years here. Were there any periods of your life in which you were gone away from Terre Haute?

MARTIN: Only short periods when I worked for a while in Chicago and a short time in New York, but you could say I spent my entire life here.

WBP: Now, when you say a "short time," was that a year or so or less than a year?

MARTIN: Less than a year.

WBP: Do you remember what years those were that you were gone?

MARTIN: Not offhand, no. During the '20s.

WBP: During the '20s before you moved in to work with your father?

MARTIN: One period . . . two periods in Chicago before I started working at the studio full time and one short period in New York on assignment connected with the studio.

WBP: So that was after 1924?

MARTIN: Yes. That was after 1924.

WBP: What was your formal education? Did you go to high school in Terre Haute, I assume?

MARTIN: Yes. I went to common school at Ft. Harrison, the 7th and 8th grades at Rankin school, and four years at the . . . well, it was then called Normal High School and later, State High School. I think it is now University School.

WBP: I see. Did you go to college?

MARTIN: No. I took a few courses at Indiana State Normal School but not a regular course as such. I did not graduate from the university.

WBP: You had a number of brothers and sisters, did you not?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: Can you name them?

MARTIN: Yes. Willard was the oldest. There was Willard and Ray, Lawrence, Stanley, myself, Esther and Stuart.

WBP: Your father died in an automobile accident, is that correct? Or was hit?

MARTIN: He was . . . yes. He died as a result of an automobile accident in 1933.

WBP: Was he in the automobile, or was he a pedestrian?

MARTIN: He was a pedestrian and hit by a car on Cherry Street near the post office. He was going to an assignment at the Deming Hotel to cover the junior prom of the university.

WBP: I see. After that, then your brother Willard took over the business?

MARTIN: My brother Willard had been manager of the business for some time. Toward the end of World War I, Willard joined the service and went into the Signal Corps photographic department at Fort Monmouth [NJ]. And after the armistice he stayed on at Fort Monmouth as an instructor. Then about 1921, I think it was, he came back to Terre Haute to serve as manager of the studio. Of course, he and dad were working together, but dad wanted someone to take over as manager. Willard took on that responsibility in which he served until 1930 . . . until my father's death and then until 1935 when Willard and I purchased the business from mother. And we carried on then until Willard retired about 1970, 1969 in there. We carried on the business as partners.

WBP: Good.

You were then . . . what year were you married?

MARTIN: Nineteen [hundred and] twenty-nine.

WBP: Nineteen twenty-nine. And whom did you marry?

MARTIN: Married Margaret Evinger. I met her when we were five years old, and we went through most of our school life together.

WBP: I see. Were you sweethearts all that time or did you . . .

MARTIN: Oh, off and on.

WBP: Off and on.

MARTIN: Off and on.

WBP: And you have how many children?

MARTIN: We have two children: Robert Martin and Marilyn Martin.

WBP: I see.

Where have you lived in Terre Haute? Where did you live as a child, what address?

MARTIN: On North 7th Street, which didn't have house numbers at that time. It is now . . . that address is now 3049 North 7th Street, where I live at present. Not in the same house, however. When the highway went through -- U.S. 41 -- it took about 240 feet off of the front end of the property that had been my father's and which I later purchased. And then we built on the place. They took out the old home place, and we built in the area back of that.

WBP: What year was that?

MARTIN: About 1961.

WBP: Have you lived in other locations as well?

MARTIN: Yes. We lived for a short time on North Center Street. And then in the 2900 block on North 11th Street, before we built our present residence.

WBP: Tell me where the photography shop was located?

MARTIN: The studio was located at . . . upstairs on the second floor of 681½ Wabash Avenue. That's on the southwest corner. My father started the studio in half of a room. The other half was occupied, I think, by a real estate agent. Then we took over that room. Finally, we took over most of the second floor of that building. Later, we took over the third floor of that building. Then we took over the second and third floors of the building between there and the corner, which would be 683½ Wabash Avenue. And finally we took the second and third floors of the building west of us, which would be 679 Wabash Avenue.

WBP:           Isn't that . . . you say that's just about on the corner of what streets?

MARTIN:       The Corner of 7th and Wabash diagonally across from the Terre Haute House, which some people have referred to as the "Crossroads of the World."

WBP:           Do you have any feelings, any sense of why your father decided to choose that place to locate his shop in 1906? Is that correct, in 1906?

MARTIN:       Yes, in 1906 he started the business there. I don't know . . . I think he may have chosen that because that space was available. But I think he realized that Terre Haute was moving in the direction, moving east. At that time a lot of the important businesses were farther west than that, but it happened to be right in the center of the business district for a good many years. Of course, a second-floor walk-up location. The studio was one of the very few businesses that survived for that many years in a second-floor location.

WBP:           Why is that?

MARTIN:       Well, as business progressed, people didn't choose to walk upstairs. Part of the reason that the business survived was that during the years our business was divided between portrait photography and commercial photography. Of course, the portrait photography was done mostly at the studio, but a very large percentage, a very high percentage of the commercial business was done away from there. So it really didn't matter where the location was.

WBP:           I see. If it'd been totally portrait, then it might not have fared as well over the years?

MARTIN:       That's right.

WBP:           Because people might not have wanted to walk up the stairs.

MARTIN: That's right; although there was a situation in the downtown district then, which we'll go into a little bit later, that any downtown location between 3rd Street and 9th Street would have carried a very heavy rental which that type of business requiring the amount of space that we had would have difficulty financing.

WBP: I see. During what period was this high rental that you're talking about?

MARTIN: Well, let's see. Pretty well back. I would say even as far back as World War I Terre Haute was rather unique in that it had a highly concentrated business district. Practically all of the important businesses were located on about six blocks of Wabash Avenue. There were some on Ohio Street and some on Cherry Street, but it was a highly concentrated area. And in order . . . the prosperous businesses needed to be in that area. Rent was high and the taxes were very high. Later as things began to change, the number of businesses moved out of that area; but the rent and the taxes -- particularly the taxes -- remained the same which was part of the downfall of the downtown district. I think one of the primary reasons that the downtown district disintegrated the way it did.

WBP: All right. So, now you're taking us up fairly close to the present, are you not? Or what . . . you're talking about the decline of the downtown area. Going back and thinking about what life was like in the downtown -- what the economy was like -- what would you say was the "heyday" of the downtown area? Did you remember . . . do you feel that you lived during the "heyday"? Or was . . .

MARTIN: Yes. I think so.

WBP: All right. During what years?

MARTIN: Well, I would say from World War I until World War II. Right after World War II things began to



MARTIN: change. And this was due to a number of things. Transportation, the automobile, the parking situation uptown -- all these things had a bearing on the uptown district. Of course, the . . . well, let's go 'way back. Back in the early days, Terre Haute was, of course, a horse-and-buggy era just like all other towns. Their businessmen had stores, places of business on Wabash Avenue. They drove their carriages and their delivery trucks. Some of this is a little before my time, but I know the circumstances that the . . . . If they drove their carriages to town, they would take them to one of the livery stables where the horses were kept and buggies were parked, and there was a lot of horse-and-buggy traffic on Wabash Avenue. Such delivery as there was was all done by horse-drawn vehicles. Of course, around the turn of the century and shortly thereafter, this began to change. I don't remember . . . I don't know exactly when the electrified street railways came in, but this happened all over the country, particularly in the larger cities like Chicago and New York. The transition between the horse-drawn vehicles and the electric street railroads was a rather difficult period. It was a concentration of people in downtown into the center areas; and the facilities to get to and from that area required the advent of the . . . first of all, they were horse-drawn cars, like the streetcars.

WBP: On rails?

MARTIN: On rails. Then they removed the horses which had some considerable (chuckling) disadvantages, hygiene being one of them. The big cities like Chicago and New York had lots of streetcars that -- like Chicago -- all came into the Loop. And the Loop became very crowded with the streetcars. In New York, in the downtown area, the streetcars became such a problem that it was . . . they had to go to subways or, in the case of Chicago, to elevated railroads. And in New York, in the center district the streetcars were so prominent that the people in that area were nicknamed "trolley dodgers."

MARTIN: And, incidentally, that's where the professional baseball team, the Dodgers [Brooklyn, later Los Angeles], got its name.

WBP: I didn't know that.

MARTIN: The concentration was there. And this happened, of course, to a much lesser degree [in Terre Haute]. We didn't have that kind of a problem; but as there began to be more and more automobiles, the parking problem began to be a conflict between the trolley cars and the parked automobiles. There got to be more parked automobiles.

One of the first indications of a transition from the trolley car to the gasoline vehicle was a thing here in Terre Haute. (I don't know whether this was general or not.) We had a thing here in Terre Haute that they called a "jitney bus." The jitney buses were like private . . . they were like regular, private automobiles which had a certain area in the downtown district where they would pull up and park. Like someone wanted to go to Twelve Points or up in that end of town, the parking space was on the northwest corner of 7th and Wabash. And there were a number of these operated by individuals, and I think they were licensed by the city. But they would come up and park, and people would come over and get in the car, and when they got a car full, they'd take off. They would stop anyplace. They made a regular route, but they would stop anyplace on that route. They would even stop right in front of your house if you happened to be there. But then the . . .

WBP: Do you remember the year those came into existence?

MARTIN: Well, I would say after the end of World War I until . . . well, the decade between 1920 and 1930 there was a great increase of the number of automobiles. And the jitney buses, I think, ran shortly

MARTIN: after the first World War, and then they began to fade probably around '23, '24. I don't remember exactly when the city finally got around to getting buses. Of course, the buses were operated by a privately-owned organization, but they were franchised by the city. And the buses gradually took over the trolley cars.

WBP: Did the jitneys . . . were there taxicab services along with the jitneys? Or were they a precursor to the taxis?

MARTIN: Well, there weren't very many regular taxicabs at that time. The taxicab came in a little later, and they may have run concurrently. Incidentally, the fare on the jitney was a nickel. And I don't know whether that's why they call them "jitney" or that's why they called a nickel a jitney. But anyway that was the fare.

WBP: Flat fare, you'd go anywhere for a nickel.

MARTIN: Anywhere, you could go anywhere for a nickel. Now, I don't know what the fare on the streetcar was. It was possibly about the same, or maybe it was a dime. But . . .

WBP: Did the jitney have an advantage over the streetcar?

MARTIN: Oh, some. They could go where there weren't any tracks. Incidentally, the trolley car . . . I don't know . . . the reason that they call those "trolley cars" was that they operated on an overhead wire, and they had an arm that was on a spring on the top of the car which was raised and ran along this wire. The tracks formed the ground for the electricity, and the overhead wire formed the other electrical pole. And the streetcars . . . they had two of these arms up there. When they were going north, they would raise the arm on the south end of car; and originally, the little device that rode on the wire was called a troller. (Where the trolley

MARTIN: come from, I don't know what caused the transition there.) But anyway, when the car got up to . . . there was one line that went up to Collett Park at 8th and Maple Avenue. When the car got there, they pulled down the one on the south end of the car and raised the one on the north end of the car, and the motorman moved from that one end of the car to the other. This removed the necessity of having a turnaround for the car. I don't think I remember anyplace that they had a turnaround for either the cars -- the trolley cars -- or the interurbans. They were both operated that way.

WBP: There were dual controls, controls at each end of the car?

MARTIN: That's right. They had . . . the motorman . . . I think on the interurbans they had a motorman and a conductor. On the streetcars they had only the motorman. And they were operated on direct current. And the direct current motor could operate equally well in either direction. It didn't matter; it was just controlled. So that the same motor drove the wheels.

WBP: Do you remember the fare on the streetcar?

MARTIN: I think maybe when they first started out, it might have been a nickel. Then it went up to a dime, and then like everything else went . . .

WBP: Would you give the motorman the fare? Did he have a fare box?

MARTIN: I think originally you handed the fare to the motorman when you got on. He had a big coin changer on his belt, you know, that you could make change. Later -- not too much later after the trolley cars went into operation -- they had a coin box . . . a box in which you could drop the coins. And when you got on the car, you just walked up and dropped the coins in the box, and that was it.

- MARTIN: Also, they would issue transfers. So if you came from a northbound route, came downtown and wanted to transfer to a point in the south end of town, they would issue you a transfer, and you could go clear down there on the same nickel.
- WBP: I see. Now in the wintertime, were the street-cars warm enough? Or did they have some kind of . . .
- MARTIN: They had electric heat. They weren't bad.
- WBP: So, they were comfortable . . . a comfortable way of getting . . .
- MARTIN: It was comfortable.
- WBP: Did they run frequently enough so that you didn't have to wait very long?
- MARTIN: Yes. They ran on schedule, and I would imagine that some of the lines the schedule might have been a half hour apart, might have been an hour apart. The interurbans ran pretty regular schedule. I think the schedule from Terre Haute to Indianapolis left on the hour. Run hourly.
- WBP: Right.
- MARTIN: And then about an hour-and-a-half to get to Indianapolis.
- WBP: And where would you get on the interurban?
- MARTIN: Down at the bus station . . . the terminal building which I think is still standing.
- WBP: Terminal Arcade?
- MARTIN: Terminal Arcade, yes.
- WBP: And this was throughout your memory?
- MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: From the time you were old enough to remember that's where you got on the interurban?

MARTIN: You got on the interurban there, and the interurban came in . . . well, it would come in on 9th Street and go up half-way to Cherry Street and go into the lot back of the Terminal Arcade and then come out the north side of that block on 8th Street and then turn and go either east or west or whichever way the car . . . . It made a loop through the area.

WBP: I see. What kind of facilities did they have inside the Terminal Arcade building?

MARTIN: Well, they had a restaurant, newsstand, and ticket office and waiting room. And . . . pretty much like a small railroad station.

WBP: Was there a basement in that building?

MARTIN: Yes. I've been in the basement, but I don't remember . . .

WBP: Would there have been restrooms down there?

MARTIN: Oh! Yes, they had restrooms.

WBP: Were they in the basement?

MARTIN: I think they were, yes.

And they had a freight area in the basement, too.

The interurbans hauled a considerable amount of freight in addition to the passenger service. They hauled a lot of milk. They picked up milk along the route. Farmers would bring the milk up in big 5-gallon milk cans and have it on the platform, and they'd pull up just long enough to slide those into the baggage compartment of the interurban, and they'd bring them on in to the terminal, and the milk company . . . let's see. Model Milk Company, I think, was one of them. Anyway . . .

WBP: Excuse me. What was the name?

MARTIN: I think it was Model Milk Company.

WBP: M-o-d-e-l . .

MARTIN: Yes. That may have been little bit later. I can't remember the name of the first milk company, but Borden's came later. They took over Model, but the milk company would pick up these cans and take them to the creamery where it was processed, and then from there . . . we're getting off the transportation problem, but . . .

WBP: No, we are . . .

MARTIN: From there, the milkman . . . /there were/ horse-drawn milk wagons even much later. I think the last horse-drawn vehicles on the streets were the horse-drawn milk wagons.

WBP: Delivery, huh?

MARTIN: Delivered fresh milk and early in the morning. You'd set the milk bottle out in the evening with the money for the milk, or they had tickets that you could buy. You'd put them in the milk bottles and the next morning when you're ready for breakfast, why the milkman had been there. Hence the line: "Cometh the dawn and with the dawn, the milkman." (laughs)

WBP: Yes.

Were there also horse-drawn ice wagons?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: I remember them.

MARTIN: The horse-drawn ice wagons disappeared. They changed to trucks much earlier than the milkman. I don't think I can . . . I knew there were, but I don't think I can remember . . .

WBP: Were there any other commodities that the interurban would deliver from the farms into the city?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. A number of commodities that couldn't . . . I mean that were not too large of volume for the size of the interurban to take care of. But they handled a lot of merchandise and . . . They had interurban lines that ran from Terre Haute to Clinton, Sullivan, Paris, and, of course, to Indianapolis. There may have been one other in there.

But I believe that . . . we used the interurban service in our photographic business. If we needed some supplies that we didn't normally carry, we could call the H. Lieber Company in Indianapolis; they'd put it on the first . . .

WBP: What company . . . could you spell that? Lieber?

MARTIN: The H. Lieber and that's l-i-e-b-e-r. Lieber is a very well-known name in Indianapolis of . . . the Lieber park was named after . . .

WBP: Richard Lieber.

MARTIN: After Richard Lieber, yes.

WBP: The state park.

MARTIN: Yeah. But anyway we would order . . . we could call the Lieber company and order materials, and we could have them . . . we could call before noon and have them that afternoon. I mean it was a good service.

WBP: Boy!

MARTIN: It was what we considered then pretty expensive, but it would be, of course, very reasonable now.



MARTIN: But also another way we used it -- if an important news event happened in Terre Haute, we would photograph it, make a rush print of it, put it on the interurban; and they'd have it in the Indianapolis papers. Also where they put it on the wire, it was syndicated and coast-to-coast.

Also we did the same thing on the railroads. Along, it must have been about 19 . . . oh, in mid-'20s they had a bad mine disaster down south-east of town. And we photographed it and took the film in to Sullivan, which was not a normal stop on the railroad . . . . The C. & E.I. railroad went through Sullivan, but they normally didn't stop there. But we took the film holders -- the undeveloped film still in the holders -- and they stopped the train at Sullivan. We found one of the conductors and turned the film over to him with instructions that he would be met at Dearborn Street Station /Chicago/ with a representative of the press wire services and that they would pay him for his service. The railroad company kind of frowned on that a little, but that was done a number of times.

WBP: Huh! I want to get back to the Sullivan mine disaster in a minute, but I'd like to ask you some more questions that have come to mind as you talked about the interurbans.

Were there several tracks that went into the area behind the Terminal Arcade . . . rather north of the Terminal Arcade?

MARTIN: Yes. There was a number of tracks in there.

WBP: So that more than one car could stop at the same time?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: Do you remember how many?

MARTIN: No, I would imagine that there were probably six lines through there. The streetcars . . . I don't think the streetcars went into that area at all. They went along Wabash Avenue, and they could stop right near the front entrance of the Terminal Arcade, but they didn't go into that area.

WBP: I see. The tracks on Wabash were designated exclusively for streetcars rather than for interurbans.

MARTIN: No, the interurbans traveled on the same track as the streetcars.

WBP: I see. But the interurbans . . . the streetcars would not go north of the . . . would not go into the area . . .

MARTIN: That's right.

WBP: . . . where the interurban cars went north of the Terminal Arcade.

MARTIN: On Wabash Avenue, of course, there was two-lane traffic on the . . . so that all the eastbound traffic was . . . it would be just like a highway, so that the interurbans and the streetcars, they would come right on the same track . . .

WBP: They're the same gauge, and they could use the same track.

MARTIN: Yes, the same gauge.

WBP: When you wanted to . . . I suppose then you could take a streetcar from your house downtown to the Terminal Arcade and then go in. Would you buy a ticket?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: If you wanted to go then to another city, you'd

WBP: buy a ticket and wait for your interurban car and then you would board and give the conductor your ticket? He'd punch your ticket?

MARTIN: I think he would take the ticket.

WBP: He would take the ticket?

MARTIN: Yeah. The conductor on the interurban.

WBP: The conductor on the interurban could also sell tickets if you got on, say, out at Rose-Hulman [Then Rose Polytechnic Institute]?

MARTIN: Yes.

Oh! Along the way there were designated stops and . . . . Take the line that goes up to Clinton. About, oh maybe every six blocks or so there was a designated stop. And if you wanted to board the interurban, you had to be at a designated stop. It'd stop there. There may not be anything else there, but some of the locations up north on Lafayette Avenue are still designated as "Stop 14," "Stop 16," "Stop 21 road" and this sort of thing, and that was the stop on the interurban.

WBP: Well, how would you know it was a stop?

MARTIN: Well, I think it was probably marked. But some places they had a little waiting shelter, on the more busy places.

WBP: I see. And what would those waiting shelters look like?

MARTIN: Oh, just little sheds.

WBP: Little shed. Would it be open on one side and closed in on three sides?

MARTIN: That would be about it.

WBP: With a bench inside?

MARTIN: Yes. That would be about the extent of it.

WBP: Were there similar sheds for the streetcars?

MARTIN: No. I don't remember any of that. Later, during the life of the streetcars years, at 7th and Wabash and 6th and Wabash and several stops on Wabash Avenue they built what they call a loading area. They had a concrete barricade at the west end of the loading area, which might be a hundred feet long; and the passengers could walk out to this boarding area and the traffic would have to go around them, between that area and the sidewalk.

WBP: I see. Now, was this elevated? Or was this just . . .

MARTIN: No, it was just /level with the pavement/. The concrete bunker was built out there, so that the traffic had to go in between there.

WBP: Like a curb -- a high curb?

MARTIN: Like a . . . five feet high, maybe. I have some photographs that show that. It was a beautiful place to crack up an automobile, people that didn't realize that it was there, but anyway . . .

WBP: Those would be streetcar loading . . . busy downtown areas?

MARTIN: Yes, just the downtown places.

I remember one night I was working up in the studio about . . . it must have been close to midnight, and I heard a terrible racket out in front. I thought it must be a horrible disaster. And we had a big window - like a big picture window, which was used, incidentally, to make portraits during the early days, but later it gave a beautiful view of the downtown section -- and I was working on the third floor, and I went out and looked out. And a

MARTIN: big truck loaded with crates of chickens had hit that barricade, and there were more chickens than you ever saw in a barnyard running all over.

WBP: Ha, ha!

MARTIN: But, yes, they were hit every once in a while.

WBP: Was there anyplace else that you could get on the interurban in the downtown area besides Terminal Arcade? Would there be interurban stops?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. I think the interurbans would stop . . . I think they frowned on stopping at every street corner. I believe they had a restriction that the interurban would go directly from the Terminal Arcade to about as far . . . beyond about where the streetcar would service. And then they would start at the regular stations. And those stations were not too far apart. Stop 14 . . . the Stop 14 road is . . . you know where the end of 13th Street is when you go up 13th Street and . . .

WBP: Twelve Points?

MARTIN: Yes, well, you go clear up to the end of 13th Street where U.S. 41 cuts it off.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: That road that goes east from there was known as the Stop 14 road. So, there were 14 stops between downtown . . . between, well, either downtown Terre Haute or from Twelve Points there were 14 stops along the way.

WBP: I see. And that's for the streetcar?

MARTIN: No. That was for interurbans.

WBP: That's for the interurbans?

MARTIN: Interurbans.

MARTIN: The streetcar, they had one streetcar that went up North 8th Street as far as Collett Park. They had another streetcar that went up North 13th Street to the Twelve Points district. It may . . . I think it just went to Twelve Points. And then out east they had streetcar service to Highland Lawn. There was a lot of use of the streetcars; people didn't have cars. Decoration Day was a big event and the streetcars ran special cars . . . a special number of cars. And sometimes they even ran a type of an interurban car out to Highland Lawn. And they /the people/ would go out and spend all day; go out to Highland Lawn, decorating the graves and come back.

And then another line went down South 7th Street. They ran the streetcar line right into the entrance of Davis Gardens, because in those days Davis Gardens was the largest area under glass in the world. And they grew produce -- tomatoes, lettuce, all kinds of produce -- under glass which made fresh produce available and required a great many employees. Oh, they might . . . I don't know. I think they must surely run between 50 and 100 people working down there regularly, and they all went down on the streetcar, and the streetcar went right in to their office.

WBP: Now, you're talking about the 1920s?

MARTIN: Probably earlier than that. I would say . . .

WBP: During your childhood and . . .

MARTIN: I would say during the first . . . the heyday of the Davis Gardens would probably be from shortly after the turn of the century until about 19-- . . . oh, they began to go down . . . around 1930-1935 they began to specialize. They grew a lot of lettuce that was shipped all over. But as the transport trucks came in and it became possible to transport fresh produce from Florida and the southern areas and so forth, it . . . because of the labor costs and various other factors, heating costs, it became

MARTIN: not feasible to operate that kind of an operation.

WBP: Yes. I can remember seeing back in the early '70s, when I came here, the greenhouses. They may still have been in operation then. I don't know.

MARTIN: Yes, they were operating up until, I'd say, a little bit after that time. They were growing primarily lettuce and tomatoes.

WBP: Uh huh.

Let's go back to interurbans again. Interurbans on 13th Street. In one of our interviews, there was an indication that the coal miners would go out 13th Street. Is that true?

MARTIN: That's right. The coal miners . . . a lot of the coal miners would go out 13th Street to a stop on the rail line that went to the mines over north and west of Terre Haute where they would board a regular miners' train that went out about, I don't know, I think about 5:30, 6 o'clock in the morning and took the workers -- many miners -- to the mines out northwest of town.

WBP: To the northwest. What township . . . would those mines be in Vigo County or would they be . . .

MARTIN: Yes, they . . . a lot of them are . . . I think most of them were in Vigo County and toward the northwest part. And they were big, of course, deep shaft mines. All the mines were deep shaft at that time.

WBP: So, these miners would get on the train . . . in your memory as a young man they'd get on the train at the corner of Wabash and 13th?

MARTIN: Anyplace they happened to be . . . anyplace they happened to live. Anyplace in town.

WBP: They would come to 13th Street?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: So, the 13th Street interurban was particularly busy at certain times of the day with miners.

MARTIN: I think most of them rode streetcars.

WBP: I see.

MARTIN: Or they could . . . I think . . . well, they may have ridden the interurban. Come to think of it, there was a special shelter. There was kind of a building at the intersection of the interurban line and the railroad line.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 1-SIDE 2

WBP: We're talking about where the miners got on the . . . either streetcar or interurban to go out 13th Street to the mines which were northwest of town out in the county.

MARTIN: I think they went mostly on the interurban, because the interurban line crossed the railroad line just north and east of where Woolco Department Store is now.

WBP: In Plaza North.

MARTIN: Yes, in Plaza North.

WBP: I see.

MARTIN: The railroad runs right along back of Plaza North; and where the interurban and railroad line crossed, they had like crossing gates. And when the interurban approached, the motorman had to get off the interurban and go over and manually open the gates and be sure that there was no train coming before he could take the interurban across the track. So far as I know, there was never an accident



MARTIN: between the interurban and train. But the miners would all get off there, and the miners' train was called the "doodlebug." I don't know where they got that name. But it was a special . . . not a very fancy car, but it probably had maybe a dozen coaches. And it would pull up and stop just for a couple of minutes. The miners would just pour on there, and in the evening -- around 4 o'clock in the afternoon or so -- when the miners came back in, the train would just hardly stop at all. The miners'd just jump off and the train was still going. But a lot of them unloaded at that terminal up there.

WBP: O.K. Again, can you give me an approximate time, just a general idea of what years this might have been?

MARTIN: I think the miners generally went to work at the mine about 6 o'clock in the morning, maybe 7.

WBP: But what years would this have been?

MARTIN: Years? Oh, from . . . probably before World War I, maybe shortly after the turn of the century through World War I and up into the '20s. Early in the '20s many of the miners had their own automobiles. Here again, they could drive to the mine. Prior to that time there was no way, but they still ran the miners' train up until . . . pretty well into the '20s.

WBP: Into the '20s, not the '30s though?

MARTIN: Probably not.

WBP: Do you remember other miners' trains going to other mines, in different locations out around the vicinity?

MARTIN: Yes. I think they did. I happened to live in the north end. I was familiar with that one, but I think maybe they had a train that went down

MARTIN: southeast. Most of the big mines were up in the northwest part of the county at that time. But they may have had a train that went down southeast, too. I'm not sure.

WBP: Then there were, of course, also mines in Nevins Township -- Coal Bluff and Fontanet. Do you remember any of those? The miners would go out those railroads no doubt, too, but that may have been before the turn of the century?

MARTIN: No. I don't think so. I don't know about the transportation out there.

WBP: Maybe most of the miners lived out there? That's a possibility.

MARTIN: I think they did. They had . . . that's why some of those little towns came about like Coal Bluff. And some of them amounted to, almost, company towns, although so far as I know, we didn't have any company-owned housing -- that type of thing which a good many big companies around over the United States had.

WBP: All right. Let's go back to downtown. I suppose the Terminal Arcade was primarily a waiting room inside.

MARTIN: Yes. That's right.

WBP: There would be benches that ran along the length . . . in the center of it? And there would be what? Newspaper stand? Tobacco stand?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: Do you remember any other kinds of . . .

MARTIN: Restaurant.

WBP: Restaurant?

MARTIN: Yes, they had a restaurant.

WBP: Do you remember any of the people who would work there or who were in charge of . . . managed the place? I know this is pretty long ago, but if you could think of any names, I'd be happy to have them. Any notable downtown people?

MARTIN: I have a remarkable memory. It's amazing how many things I can't remember!

WBP: (laughs) That's O.K. Let's go to another thing I have here.

MARTIN: Say, incidentally, these were operated by what was called the traction company, T.H.I. & E., Terre Haute, Indianapolis & Eastern Traction Company.

WBP: You're talking about the interurbans?

MARTIN: Yes, the interurbans.

WBP: Did they operate all of the interurbans?

MARTIN: I think they operated the streetcars, originally, also. They operated all the interurbans.

WBP: So, there was only one company then that operated the interurbans?

MARTIN: So far as I know. And my father, I think about the time he was married, worked for a while in the engineering office of the traction company. And then when he left the traction company, he had . . . one of his duties in there was making blueprints for the engineering department. And when he branched out and opened the studio, one of the first things he did was to make blueprints for engineering departments and construction companies, and so forth, around Terre Haute. That's how he started.

WBP: I see. That'd given him the idea of opening a studio and photography shop.

MARTIN: Yes. Could be. Then on Sunday he'd go out to the parks and photograph family reunions.

His office hours during those days . . . .  
We're getting off the traction company though.

WBP: Go ahead.

MARTIN: His office hours during those days were 7 a.m. in the morning until 9 p.m. in the evenings seven days a week!

WBP: My goodness!

MARTIN: But that was not unusual! I mean a lot of businesses operated on that type of a schedule.

WBP: Operated at a time that would be convenient to the people who were their clients.

MARTIN: Yes.

One other thing on the traction company. We were talking about the baggage. They had some cars that ran strictly as baggage cars, not carrying passengers. And they had one car which served as a funeral car. If there was a funeral to be in Clinton or some Terre Haute people or something of this sort . . . if there was a funeral that . . . well, maybe even out to Highland Lawn . . . incidentally, the tracks turned right into Highland Lawn . . . . And they had a special car. If it was a funeral for a very prominent person, they would run this special car out there and take the whole group out to the cemetery.

WBP: Amazing.

Where were the areas in the downtown where there would . . . normally, you could always count on there being a gathering of people? I suppose that the Terminal Arcade would be a logical place

WBP: to find people gathered. Were there other locations that were natural gathering places? I suppose that's part of what the interurbans and streetcars did; it tended to concentrate people from the outer lying areas into the downtown. And are you saying that all of Wabash Avenue between 3rd and 9th had this feature? Or were there areas within that area that were always . . . where most people gathered? Centers of activity as it were?

MARTIN: Well . . . . Of course, social activity, there was a lot of social activity at the Terre Haute House, primarily after 1928 when the new hotel was built. The Terre Haute House was the center of the social activity -- the big dinners and so forth in the Mayflower Room. All the dances were held either at the Terre Haute House or the Deming Hotel. The Deming had a big ballroom where they held some of the activities.

WBP: Would you call those two hotels then the luxury hotels, the glamorous hotels?

MARTIN: Yes. They were the big, important hotels. There were some other hotels that went farther back than that. The Indois Hotel down by the courthouse was one of the earlier ones. In the earlier days, the hotels . . . during the days when all the traveling salesmen would move from town to town on the railroads, they had three or four very large hotels up on North 9th Street near the Union Depot because the traveling men would get off the train and go to the hotel. Then they would travel around Terre Haute and then they'd go back to the hotel. And the last one to disappear from up there was at 9th and . . . well, near the Union Depot was the . . . I can't remember the name of it.

WBP: We can find that out.

MARTIN: Yes. I have a picture of it in the series but . . .

WBP: The Northern was next to the Big Four Depot.

MARTIN: Yeah. The Great Northern Hotel.

WBP: Was it also a salesmen's place?

MARTIN: Yes. That was the only big hotel on the . . . the railroad was . . . in the early writings you will find that railroad referred to as the Van Line. That was the Vandalia Railroad. Everybody called it the Vandalia Railroad because I think it terminated at Vandalia, /Illinois/. But Vandalia Railroad, and then the CCC & St. L Railway which became the Big Four railroad. /The Vandalia Railroad became the Pennsylvania Railroad and used Union Depot rather than the Big Four mentioned here./ And then after the Big Four railroad, it became . . . I think there was one more change in there before it became Conrail.

WBP: What did the CCC & St. L stand for? St. Louis is no doubt "St. L.," right?

MARTIN: Chicago . . . no. Cleveland, Cincinnati . . .

WBP: We can probably find that out. I thought maybe you knew offhand. /It was Cleveland, Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis/.

Do you know how much a room, a nice room, would cost in the Terre Haute House? What the room rate was?

MARTIN: Well, say around 1930, '35?

WBP: Oh, when it was new.

MARTIN: I would say rooms could probably be had for two-and-a-half /dollars/, maybe three-and-a-half. This was pretty much the rate, going rate over the country.

WBP: I see. Would that be a little bit higher than some of the other hotels?

MARTIN: Yeah. The Indois Hotel, which was . . . there was another one called the Farmers' Hotel. It was a little different type of a hotel. Farmers' Hotel was a smaller hotel and a restaurant where they served meals family style. You'd go in, and they'd just serve it like you . . . . Go in and sit down, pass things around.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: You ate what was on the table, when you had enough . . . it was kind of interesting. But I know the . . . quite early, after the turn of the century there were hotels . . . rooms could be had for a dollar a night.

WBP: I see. O.K.

You have a photograph of the old Terre Haute House being demolished. I suppose in the mid-1920s, 1925, 1926 . . .

MARTIN: Nineteen /hundred and/ twenty-eight.

WBP: Nineteen twenty-eight?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: So, the old hotel was demolished and the new hotel put up in the same year almost? They just . . . .

MARTIN: Yeah, it was about a year-and-a-half.

WBP: Do you know why they did . . . they tore down the old one?

MARTIN: Well, it was getting pretty decrepit. It had been there for quite a long time. Now, the one that was torn down at that time was the second building. The original building was called The Prairie House. And The Prairie House was there . . . well, Abraham Lincoln stopped at The Prairie House several times

MARTIN: on his way from Springfield to Washington. And so it was there at the time of the Civil War. And the first . . . when The Prairie House was first built, I think it was built by Chauncey Rose, wasn't it?

WBP: Yes, it was.

MARTIN: And it was kind of out in the country. The area west of the Terre Haute House for two or three blocks in there was all cornfield. Now, this was before my memory, but I know some of these things from history. But . . . Chauncey Rose, he must have built the hotel there. It must have been around 1830s, 1840s . . .

WBP: I think you're right.

MARTIN: Someplace in that area.

WBP: Downtown, you mentioned restaurant. It was the Farmers' Hotel that was the place that had family style?

MARTIN: Yes, that was visited mostly by the agricultural people.

WBP: Was it located near the market?

MARTIN: It was located almost across the street from the City Hall, the old City Hall.

WBP: I see. On the corner of what? Walnut and . . . Poplar?

MARTIN: It was on the south side of Walnut and west of 4th Street. I think in that general area. /Actual-ly the north side of Walnut/.

WBP: Was there a place where the farmers would bring their produce in to sell?

MARTIN: Yes. I think originally it was pretty much down around the old City Hall. They had a big area



MARTIN: around the City Hall where they . . .

WBP: City Hall, not the courthouse, but the City Hall?

MARTIN: The City Hall, yes. They may have had originally a market on the lawn of the courthouse. That would be history that I'd have to read in a book. I don't . . . . Now later, much after the time of the market around the City Hall -- which would be like around the turn of the century but after World War I -- they had a city market up in the northwest part of town, up about . . . roughly 2nd and Chestnut . . . part of that area in there. There's a square block in there where farmers brought in their produce.

WBP: I see.

BREAK TIME

WBP: I'm talking with Ken Martin. We've just taken a break, and I've talked with him about the locations where people gathered in Terre Haute. And he mentioned the Union Station. How many hotels did you say that were probably there in, say, the 1920s?

MARTIN: I would say there were . . . in 1920 there must have been maybe three hotels left. But before 1920 and before World War I, there must have been a half a dozen hotels, at least one or two elegant eating places, places of entertainment, bathhouses and this sort of thing in that area to service, primarily, traveling salesmen, traveling businessmen, and also casual travelers on the train that preferred to travel in the daytime and stop in the evening and stay overnight in the hotel and go on the railroad the next day. That was done quite a bit. People that preferred to do that rather than travel in pullman.

WBP: So, Terre Haute was a notable railroad cross-roads as well.

MARTIN: That's right.

WBP: A stopover point.

MARTIN: That's right. The railroads . . . the C. & E.I. railroad from Chicago to Florida and the east-west railroad that ran from Washington and New York and west through Indianapolis . . .

WBP: Was that the Big Four?

MARTIN: Well, the Big Four and also the Pennsylvania railroad, the two big railroads came through Terre Haute. And they . . . which gave a cross-country, coast-to-coast from east to west and from north and south. These railroads went as far as St. Louis, and then they junctioned with the lines that went on to the west coast.

WBP: Yes. Good.

The Union Station itself had a lot of facilities inside it, did it not?

MARTIN: They had a lot of offices and, of course, rest rooms and a few meeting places. They had . . . all the depots around over the country had a restaurant of sort. The local . . . I mean the business offices for this entire area between Indianapolis and St. Louis were located in the Union Station.

WBP: The business offices for the railroad?

MARTIN: For Pennsylvania railroad.

WBP: For the Pennsylvania railroad.

MARTIN: Yes. However, I think the C. & E.I. had some offices there, too.

WBP: There were also shops right across from Union Station to the east, were there not? Railroad shops?

MARTIN: Well, there were . . . both the Pennsylvania railroad and the Big Four railroad had extensive shops east of 25th Street and, oh, north of Wabash Avenue, up . . . well, north of the Pennsylvania railroad. Both railroads had shops -- roundhouses they called them -- where they serviced the locomotives. And the Pennsylvania railroad had extensive shops where they rebuilt cars. They brought cars in and actually rebuilt them. And that operation up there at times probably employed 150 or 200 people. It was a big operation.

WBP: Yes. During your lifetime? During the '20s, '30s, up into the '40s?

MARTIN: Easing off in the late '20s and possibly carrying over into the '30s, maybe easing off considerably at the big Depression after 1930.

WBP: I see. All right.

Let's talk about the heyday of downtown as you remember it. There were a number of restaurants and a variety of different kinds of stores -- Kresge's and Woolworth's both and Root's Store and Herz, a number of theaters, the Grand theater I suppose being the most notable. But what years would you say in your lifetime were times when the downtown seemed to be booming? And seemed to be most lively?

MARTIN: Well, I think after . . . well, in just about the area covered by my lifetime. I was born in 1909. And, of course, I remember some things about the downtown area because I went down frequently and because of the studio. And when I was in the lower grades of school, I peddled papers on Wabash Avenue, oh, as early as eight or nine years old; and so I was familiar with the area at that time. And Wabash Avenue was a very busy place during that period. And it remained so up until around the time of World War II. And gradually it was diminishing after that time.

MARTIN: All these changes take place so gradually that you don't see them while they happen. You look back at them and you can see it.

But after I started working full time or after I started working at the studio, of course, my connection with the photographic business being a press photographer opened the doors to many places that the average person didn't normally have access to.

And about 1928 the Terre Haute Tribune added a rotogravure section to their Sunday paper, and we had made the photographs for the Tribune. There were some other photographers, but we had made the majority of photographs for three newspapers -- the Terre Haute Post, the Terre Haute Star, and the Terre Haute Tribune. But when they started the rotogravure section, this was rather unique in the newspaper field. Many of the big town newspapers had roto sections, but the thing that was unique about the Terre Haute paper was that it was primarily all local stuff. Everything in the roto was local material. Well, this required making some, oh, 40, 50, 60 pictures a week to supply . . . the roto sometimes ran 8 pages, 12 pages, in some events even more than that. A lot of people on the newspaper business thought it was kind of a corny operation. We photographed all the club activities, the new officers, various organizations, all the school activities, the graduations and dinners, and all social activities which some of the bigtown newspapers couldn't do. But really, it was a great thing for Terre Haute in my estimation. It made it possible for a lot of people in Terre Haute to know a lot of other people. It was an operation that would have not been possible or feasible in Indianapolis, but in Terre Haute, it fit. And I think it made a lot of people acquainted. It made Terre Haute kind of an overgrown small town where everybody knows everybody else, but it was big enough that everybody didn't know everybody else's business. If you get what I mean!

WBP: Yes. Excellent!

MARTIN: Yes. That's kind of a description of it. But this made it possible or required that I know a lot of people, that I get into a lot of areas that the normal person wouldn't have any occasion to be.

WBP: Yes. Such as what? Give . . . what did you know about Terre Haute that the average person probably did not know because he didn't have access like you did?

MARTIN: Well, we would get into all the various manufacturing plants for instance, both in connection with the newspaper work and in connection with the work that we did for that company. Of course, a good deal of that was privileged. I mean it was made for the company and was privileged information, but it did give me an insight. Whenever there was a new company coming to town, why we always photographed all of the new people that were coming in to make them acquainted with the people of Terre Haute. And I think it was a very fine thing, and if you talk to some of the little older residents, they say that they miss the rotogravure section.

WBP: I bet they do.

MARTIN: And that was started in 1928 and was just discontinued just a couple of years ago. But there was reasons for it discontinuing, too. Financial reasons. But Terre Haute was one of not too many papers in the entire United States that had a full format rotogravure section, and it was the last one in the country to discontinue the full format roto. And that was . . . part of the reason for discontinuing it was the facilities. It was printed down in the rotogravure plant in Louisville, and when they were printing a lot of them, they could do it. But when Terre Haute became the only one, why the expense got to the place where they couldn't handle it.

MARTIN: One remark . . . I visited the plant down there, and one remark that I think is significant, the man . . . I met the man down there that handled the layout for the roto and he said the people of Terre Haute must be the best-fed people in all the world, because every issue of the roto had a dozen or more pictures of banquets and dinners and parties and this sort of thing. We photographed all the Christmas parties. There was a period there when Christmas parties, company parties were a great thing. And I'd photograph eight, ten, fifteen of them night after night.

WBP: What you're saying then is that Terre Haute, like all American cities I suppose, is an organization town. People like to join clubs.

MARTIN: They're joiners.

WBP: Organizations. They're joiners. They join more than one club; they're members of several different ones -- the Newcomers, the Kiwanis, the Rotary, the Elks, those kind of things.

MARTIN: I think that's good.

WBP: Masonic Lodges, I suppose, has been a force?

MARTIN: Yes. Masonic Lodge is very active here.

WBP: In your view, over the years what would you say were consistently the most important clubs -- the clubs that had most of the civic leaders?

MARTIN: Well, of course, the service club -- like the Kiwanis club. My brother Willard was one of the early presidents of the Kiwanis club. And the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Optimist club. I was a charter member of the Optimist Club. Let's see, did I mention Rotary? Oh, the Lions club. My father was one of the organizers of the local Lions club and was a president, so the family was involved in this.

MARTIN: But I think it went a long way to make Terre Haute a friendly place. This has been one of the things that I have always liked about Terre Haute, that they're friendly people. And it's big enough that we have excellent hospitals; we have excellent schools. We have many churches of all denominations. It's big enough for that, but it's small enough that people can . . . a large segment of the population can know people and feel like a small town, friendly community.

WBP: Yes, I see.

MARTIN: Some people laugh at that, but I don't. It's one of the things I liked about Terre Haute.

WBP: Ah-ha. Are there other things that you liked that you'd like to add at this point? The things that you think are distinctive about Terre Haute and are virtues?

MARTIN: Well, one important thing that Terre Haute has had is that it has some large industry but also the industries were diversified to the extent that if one company ceased operation for some reason or other, it didn't really make all that much difference.

Through the years of my living in Terre Haute the . . . well, we would have anywhere from 125 to maybe 200 industries, widely diversified -- some big, some small -- and that's the situation today. Maybe not as much now as it has been sometime previously, but this carried us over during some times when other people only had one or two or three big industries. Some towns in Indiana had maybe one industry that was associated with the automobile business, and when the automobile took a slump, why it was difficult for that period.

Also another thing that has made Terre Haute less vulnerable to that type of thing is Indiana State University and the Rose Polytechnic Institute /now Rose-Hulman/ and St. Mary-of-the Woods and

MARTIN: later, Ivy Tech [Indiana Vocational Technical Institute]. These are all things that make Terre Haute a fine place to live. There's opportunity for education of our families. One of my brothers graduated from Rose Polytechnic Institute about 1924, and later in his life he operated an office of consulting engineer over in St. Louis. He had at one time 34, I think, engineers in his office. It was consulting and designing, but he had engineers from all electrical, mechanical -- all the different branches of engineering. And my brother Lawrence graduated from Indiana State and taught school a good part of his life in South Bend where he retired a few years ago. So a good college education can be had in Terre Haute for Terre Haute residents at a much less cost than it would cost them to go to another area.

WBP: O.K. Good.

In your view what have been the most important industries in Terre Haute during your years of adulthood.

MARTIN: Well, let's go over a few of them. I jotted down just a few of the industries. And this, of course, since we had like 150 industries, it's a little hard. But just the ones that come to my mind offhand . . .

WBP: O.K. Go ahead. I'm listening.

MARTIN: . . . were the railroads. We had four or five railroads with their car shops and so forth. This was a very large industry, taxwise. The railroads have extensive property in the area, and it's a good thing taxwise. And then in the early days, they would account for 500 working people -- personnel.

And the Highland Iron & Steel company operated for a number of years; Terre Haute Vitrified Brick company; the mines during one period must have employed several thousand miners in the early days



MARTIN: and then, of course, later in the strip pits. Most of the mining around Terre Haute is strip mining now, but it is still a big industry. Quaker Maid Company was a branch of the Atlantic and Pacific company, and they canned produce which was sold by A & P. And when the Quaker Maid was operating, they required containers, and the American Can Company built a plant down there on the Wabash River to manufacture tin cans which were used by Quaker Maid. Very largely, a large per cent of their product went directly to Quaker Maid. And then when Quaker Maid changed their operation a little bit, American Can Company pulled out, and it was taken over by the Pillsbury Company. It is the building which they now have.

The Terre Haute Brewing Company was operating for quite a number of years before Prohibition. Then, right after Prohibition the Baur -- Ed Baur -- took over the brewing company. Their big product, their beer was called Champagne Velvet. It was widely distributed, and it was accredited with being one of the better beers. I'm no authority on beer. (laughingly)

And the Merchants Distilling Company operated for quite a number of years. In the very early history of Terre Haute, the distilleries were some of the big industries. They had the distilleries and also the hominy mills where the grain was converted to hominy which was used in the distilling industry -- the Merchants Distilling Company.

WBP: Now, you're talking about before Prohibition?

MARTIN: This was before Prohibition. This was early. Before World War I. A lot of this goes around the turn of the century and even before, almost back to the Civil War. Terre Haute was a big distilling country. You could buy whisky for 25¢ a gallon.

Commercial Solvents Company established here

MARTIN: about 1924, I think. And they made . . . well, commercial solvents. They manufactured various commercial chemicals, a very important thing. And a little later, the Pfizer Company established a plant here. Both of those are . . . well, Commercial Solvents was sold to another company, but the plant is still there. Pfizer is a big operation that took over the area that the Vigo Ordnance had built during World War II. /Vigo Ordnance produced munitions for the Navy. It is generally believed that they were producing material for germ warfare which was never used./

Buetner-Shelburn Company was one of the fairly large manufacturing companies, made heavy mining equipment /coal cutters and loaders for use in deep shaft mines/. They started operation about . . . well, just a year or two after the turn of the century and operated 'til the '20s, I think.

And Prox Boiler Company was a big company, oh, surely, before the turn of the century, and they operated all during that period. They shipped boilers all over the Midwest.

The Standard Wheel Works was located up on North 13th Street. It was a big company that manufactured . . . well, when they started out, they manufactured carriage wheels. And when the carriage industry began to change to gasoline-operated vehicles, they started making wheels for automobiles. And I think for a period of time the Overland Automobile Company owned . . . they bought the wheel works. I'm not sure but what they built some of the early Overland cars in Terre Haute.

There was another automobile manufacturing company here around the turn of the century or shortly after the turn of the century. They also manufactured very fine carriages. O'Connell and O'Brien, I think, was the name or something of that nature. And they went into manufacture of automobile parts and also their name was changed and included

MARTIN: automobile manufacturing. But, I don't know. They must have closed operation maybe around 1910 or thereabouts.

Wabash Fibre Box has always been a big company manufacturing corrugated containers. They were closely associated with the Terre Haute Paper Company that manufactured brown kraft paper from straw. When the farming operation changed to leave the straw on the fields -- which was a good thing, really, for farmers, but it cut off the supply of straw -- they changed to manufacturing paper from pulpwood of which there is a very good supply in this area. And the paper mill has always been one of the big industries.

Terre Haute Coke & Gas Company /Indiana Gas & Chemical Company/ manufactured gas and coke for industry, for the steel industry and various other industries. The Root Glass Company was owned by Chapman Root to start with. Originally it had a plant up north of Maple Avenue about adjacent to the railroads, and then they moved down south on South 3rd Street about, oh, about Voorhees Street. But it operated as a glass company. I think they're still operating as a glass company.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: The Coca Cola bottle was designed and first manufactured in Terre Haute by the Root Glass Company under Chapman Root. They had a big contract with the Coca Cola bottling company. He had the vision to realize that the bottling business was a growing thing, and he bought the franchise for the Coca Cola bottling in seven states including Georgia, New York, Indiana . . . . But he had the franchise for bottling for seven states, and that's where he made a few of his first millions.

There was the Turner Glass Company. It was one of the early glass companies.

WBP: What's that . . . which . . .

MARTIN: Turner, t-u-r-n-e-r. They were out on 25th Street just north of the Pennsylvania railroad.

Thomson-Symon Company was a poster company that operated a little later than some of the others.

And the Grasselli Chemical Company was built up north of town during World War I, but it operated only a very short time /1916-1920/. They manufactured spelter or the zinc which was used to make galvanized iron. And shortly after their plant was completed, another process which was cheaper and better put the Grasselli plant out of business.

WBP: How do you spell that?

MARTIN: Better check the spelling, but I think it was g-r-, I think it was g-r-i-s-e-l-l-i, Griselli.

But they built a community /for the plant workers which is still called Grasselli/.

END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2

WBP: We're continuing the oral history interview between Bill Pickett and Ken Martin on Monday, June 8, 1981. Mr. Martin was listing the industries that were in Terre Haute during his lifetime. So, will you continue, Mr. Martin?

MARTIN: Well, we talked about the Grasselli Chemical Company, which was quite active during World War I. There were many industries around Terre Haute. Of course, the Public Service Company of Indiana has been very important to the community. And the Dresser power station was one of the very early power generating stations and was located here because of the Wabash River. Then a number of years later the Wabash River generating station, which is a quite large station, was built north of Terre

MARTIN: Haute, also on the Wabash River. The Public Service Company is one of the largest taxpayers in this area.

Another smaller industry was the Eaton-O'Neill furniture company /which/ operated here for maybe ten years or so and manufactured overstuffed furniture and that type of thing, which was sold nationwide. A little later the Great Lakes Steel Company took over what originally had been the American Car and Foundry Company, which was a very important industry that operated for a number of years.

WBP: That was located where?

MARTIN: That was located on . . . I believe it's College at about . . . between 11th and 13th Street.

WBP: Where Stran Steel is now?

MARTIN: Yes. Stran Steel took over the buildings that had been operated by the American Car & Foundry Company. That company manufactured railroad cars, quite a number of /types of/ large rail equipment, and operated in Terre Haute for a number of years.

The Quaker Maid . . . no, I think I mentioned the Quaker Maid, didn't I?

WBP: Yes, you did.

MARTIN: Columbia Records came to Terre Haute when the record business began to boom and probably for a period of time /it was/ one of the largest commercial employers in the city. Indiana State University would hardly be strictly considered an "industry," but /it/ is the largest employer of people in this entire area. It has the largest payroll.

Oh, there are many industries. It's a little difficult to say which industry is the most important to the community. It's kind of like asking which is the most important leg to a tripod? They're all important.

WBP: That goes back to what you said earlier about the importance of diversification. That's one of the reasons Terre Haute hasn't declined in an important way economically despite the levelling off of population after 1920.

MARTIN: Terre Haute has . . . because of the diversification it hasn't had the peaks and the valleys of our economy that other towns which depended more on an individual industry have had.

WBP: Yeah, like Kokomo and Anderson right now with the difficulty in the automobile industry. We haven't had to worry so much about those downturns in one industry.

MARTIN: Those industries have been great things when the automobile industry was going good. But we survived during periods when other towns in Indiana were hurting much worse than Terre Haute.

The agricultural . . . it's not an industry, but the agricultural aspect in Vigo County and in this entire Wabash Valley has been a very important thing for Terre Haute. Possibly, [it is] maybe even the largest . . . you wouldn't say "industry," what would you call it? But the agriculture has always been, even from the very beginning . . .

WBP: It would be called an industry, the agribusiness industry.

Well, Terre Haute is remarkable in that it has diversified. At one point though, by 1920 one could say that certainly coal mining had to be the most important industry in the county because it employed the most people. Also transportation, particularly railroad-related employment, was probably second most important, was it not in terms of employees in either . . . directly employed by the railroad or in the shops in industries which were related to the railroad industry such as American Car & Foundry.

MARTIN: That's right.

WBP: But in 1920, of course, Terre Haute suffered a major blow when not only did those two industries begin to decline but also distilling because of Prohibition began to decline. And at that point, as a noted Indiana State University geographer named Drummond has pointed out in one of his essays, Terre Haute became a "no-growth" city. Its population stopped growing. It was during the 1920s when Terre Haute's population did not grow that cities around . . . the rest of the cities, major cities around the nation began to expand enormously in part because of the automobile industry and the industries that were subordinate to that. Terre Haute then became . . . began to diversify and brought in all these other industries that you've mentioned which put us on a fairly firm foundation /but/ without the growth which took place in other cities.

Would you say that Terre Haute after 1920 chose . . . attempted to grow and was unable to because it wasn't as attractive to industry as other cities? Or do you feel that there wasn't much desire on the part of civic boosters and civic leaders to bring in . . . to make Terre Haute grow like other cities were growing in the nation?

MARTIN: Well, I think one factor involved there was that Terre Haute someplace along the line took on a reputation of labor unrest. There were a number of strikes in this area and a lot of . . . industry in general considered the labor situation in Terre Haute as not being particularly favorable. Whether this is true or not . . . I don't know whether maybe Eugene V. Debs' record may have had something to do with the labor situation. We did . . . I wish I could remember the exact year, but we had a general strike in Terre Haute.

WBP: Nineteen /hundred and/ thirty-five.

MARTIN: Nineteen thirty five when everything was closed down. For a day or two you couldn't buy a loaf of bread or a bottle of milk. It was absolute. And even the local newspapers missed a publication for the first time in its history. And the labor . . . all the labor unions combined. I think the trouble started at the Columbian Enameling & Stamping Company.

Incidentally, that's one company that I hadn't mentioned. And that company was very important to Terre Haute. It was a very large employer and was the largest company of its kind in the world, manufacturing all types of enamelware, kitchen utensils and various other types of enamelled items. I think the trouble up there developed over a . . . they wanted to organize the employers up there, and the company and the employees resisted. And so all the labor unions, in order to show their strength, went out. Everything, even people that had no connection with union -- any union connection at all -- were closed down. And it was necessary to call in the state militia to preserve law and order.

I know that the traveling people, traveling men who were staying at the Terre Haute House at that time -- the guests -- were unable to find anyplace to eat. All the restaurants were closed. The food stores were closed. And the hotel management -- Mr. Ellis, I think was the manager at that time -- himself went to the kitchen, to their refrigerators, to their food storage, and opened it up and opened the Mayflower Room and laid it out and said, "Help yourself" so that they could have something to eat.

WBP: Does this mean that all the restaurant employees were sympathetic with the strikers and therefore would not work?

MARTIN: Not necessarily. They were afraid to work. No business was . . . I don't know of any place of business that was not afraid to open their front doors.



WBP: Afraid because of what?

MARTIN: Well, because of the strikers.

WBP: What would . . . what might the strikers do?

MARTIN: Well, there was a lot of vandalism, a lot of . . . oh, probably more threat of violence than actual violence, although there was some actual violence, particularly up around the stamping mill. But it took a day or two when the state militia moved in and took charge of things, and /when things/ settled down, why then things began to open up again.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: But . . .

WBP: How long was the state militia here, do you remember?

MARTIN: Oooh, maybe about a week. Not a . . .

WBP: According to the record, they were here six months.

MARTIN: Well, that could be. They were . . . for a few weeks they were very much in evidence, and I think possibly one contingent of them may have been stationed at the armory for some period of time after that, but they were not very much in evidence.

WBP: After they came, the stores opened up again. The strike was broken.

Do you know who called the National Guard in?

MARTIN: Not of my own knowledge, no. I would assume that the city government would. But this is only assumption. I assume that the city government would be responsible for maintaining /law and order/.

WBP: Would you call this the . . . is this an example of the strength of labor in Terre Haute?

MARTIN: Terre Haute has generally been a pretty strong labor . . . partly because the United Mine Workers accounted for a fair percentage of the population at the time that the U.M.W. was growing and gaining strength. This was one of the early nationwide unions that became very strong very early. The headquarters of the district was located in Terre Haute.

WBP: Yes. That's the 11th district.

MARTIN: Yes, the 11th district. And the mine workers union was a very strong one. When the mines went on strike, which they did periodically . . . when the mines went on strike, things really slumped.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: And there was one remark made . . . . One of the big department stores in Terre Haute was Schultz and Smith. They later divided, and it was Schultz store and Smith store. But they were . . . that was possibly one of the largest department stores in Terre Haute. But it was said that nine months after the coal miners went on strike, Schultz and Smith put on a big sale of baby carriages and baby beds . . .

WBP. Ha, ha!

MARTIN: But anyway . . . a side remark.

WBP: That's right.

MARTIN: But I think . . . I think that miners had a great deal to do with /it/. Terre Haute just got a bad reputation as an unfavorable union situation, which I don't think they really deserved, but I think that had some bearing on it.

WBP. I see. That influenced the city's image in the eyes of potential . . .

MARTIN: Yes. It influenced people. They got a great deal of publicity on this General Strike. This is something that hardly ever happened and one of the first ones that ever happened. And they got a lot of publicity on it, and the large companies who were looking for a place to locate were a little afraid of that situation.

WBP: All right.

Did the city fathers make efforts to overcome that image?

MARTIN: Oh, I can't think of any particular instance. I think the Chamber of Commerce certainly worked on it and . . .

WBP: They were able to bring in a number of new industries after 1935, '36. And so they must have . . . including CBS and J.I. Case and Pfizer and so, they must have . . .

MARTIN: Nearly all of those came in after World War II.

WBP: Yes. So it must not have lasted too long.

Were there any other reasons why you think that Terre Haute may not have been attractive to industry? Besides its . . .

MARTIN: Well, there must have been other things. And as far back as I can remember, it seemed to me like the Chamber of Commerce was doing a pretty fair job.

WBP: Can you remember the individuals, the men who . . .

MARTIN: Mort /Morton F./ Hayman was the director of the Chamber of Commerce for a number of years. And I think Mort did a good job to attract . . . well, let's see. Mort was . . . well, he was with the Chamber of Commerce, I know in the early '30s -- probably

MARTIN: during the decade of the '30s. And Mort and other . . . Silverstein was one of the active members of the Chamber of Commerce. The downtown merchants were nearly all members. We carried a membership in the Chamber of Commerce for 40 years, I guess. But most of the downtown merchants and so forth were active in the Chamber's work, and that brought some results.

I don't know. There never seemed to be . . . I don't want to seem anti-union or anti-labor with any remarks that I have made. But there seemed to be considerable controversy between the Chamber of Commerce on one side and the labor organizations on the other side. I don't know why, but . . .

WBP: A certain distrust?

MARTIN: Maybe. That may have been . . . but anyway that . . .

WBP: Well, the stronger the labor unions, the chances are that the more expensive the work force will be.

MARTIN: Yes. But other towns had some labor unions. Certainly, automobiles towns, the American Automobile . . . the . . . well, the union . . .

WBP: American . . . let's see, United Automobile . . . U.A.W.

MARTIN: U.A.W. The U.A.W. was certainly one of the strongest unions in the country. And one that was very active.

WBP: So there may have . . . there must have been something . . .

MARTIN: There were other towns . . .

WBP: There must have been something else about Terre Haute. It, of course, did gain a reputation as

WBP: having a fairly large vice area. There was considerable vice. And I suppose it went back to the Donn Roberts' administration. The corruption was associated with . . .

MARTIN: The Donn Roberts /political scandal 1914-57 was an odd thing. I think this is kind of one of the things that just sort of happened. There was undoubtedly vice involved there. I think the thing grew out of election irregularities, didn't it? Weren't they sent to prison for stuffing the ballot boxes and . . .

WBP: That's my understanding.

MARTIN: That was the way I understood it. And that happened when . . . well, they were sent to the federal penitentiary when I was five years old. So I didn't understand the situation thoroughly. But to give you an idea, in later years right after World War II, I made a trip to Alaska, drove up the Alaska highway. It was sort of a postman's holiday. I was working for the Bucyrus Erie Company on a series of assignments. But I drove . . . I crossed Canada and then up the highway into Alaska and stopping here and there to photograph some of their equipment. And I got pretty well back up . . . oh, I think it was up in upper Saskatchewan. And at that time they hadn't seen very many tourists up there. There was just no occasion for any tourists to go in there. The fact is, the highway was not open yet to the general public. I traveled on a United Press pass. And I drove into a filling station and met people. The Canadians have always been very friendly people. And passersby saw a foreign license on there. They came over and struck up a little conversation. One fellow I was talking to said, "What part of the United States are you from?" And I said, "Well, Indiana." He said, "Where is Indiana?" So, "Well, it's about halfway, about in the center of the country." He said, "Where do you come from in Indiana?" I said, "Well, I come from Terre Haute."

MARTIN: "Terre Haute? That rings a bell. Oh, yeah, that's where they sent all the public officials to the federal penitentiary!"

WBP: Ha!

MARTIN: That's the only thing that he knew about the area.

WBP: And this is about what year?

MARTIN: That was 1946.

WBP: 'Forty-six.

MARTIN: But that . . . I think that whole situation was . . . oh, in my own personal opinion (a lot of people don't agree with me) it was kind of similar to the Nixon thing. There was a lot of guilt involved there but for some reason or other, it took hold and was blown clear out of proportion to some other things that . . . . Worse things had gone on unnoticed and unpunished.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: But it was just one of those things. And somebody got on it. Here was solid grounds for prosecution, and they made the most of it. But I'm sure it gave Terre Haute a lot of unfavorable publicity.

Insofar as the vice situation is concerned, I was, of course, born and raised in Terre Haute. I was a boy, young man, during the period that our so-called red light district was supposed to be wide open and gambling was rampant and all these other things. And I got around Terre Haute quite a bit, but maybe I didn't go to the right places or the wrong places. But I saw very little of this type of thing.

I had no occasion to go north on North 2nd Street, even 3rd Street for three or four blocks up

MARTIN: in that area. Even when I got working in my job, I just didn't have any occasion, but I knew that friendly girls sat up in the front windows and waved at you as you went past. But I don't think the situation in that respect was certainly not any worse than it was in any other Indiana towns, and it couldn't hold a candle to the same type of thing -- the vice and corruption and gambling and everything else -- that was going on in Indianapolis. Terre Haute just got publicized for it, and certainly the article that appeared in the Saturday Evening Post was pure nonsense with only a very thin thread of fact to it. But it brought Terre Haute such unfavorable publicity. People that wanted to run Terre Haute down had something to talk about.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: And they sold some magazines here. Personally, I knew the thing was coming up because I had been contacted, and I would have nothing to do with supplying information . . . supplying illustrations for the article. But as soon as word got around, why people rushed out and bought the magazine. And I said not me. I wouldn't pay a dime for the magazine because that's what they wanted. They wanted to sell magazines, and it was just helping out with the thing they wanted to do.

WBP: Yeah. Now, part . . .

MARTIN: I never did own it.

WBP: Now, part of that article talked about the fact that there was a nationwide horse-racing, gambling syndicate operating from a store front or upstairs of a store front on Wabash Avenue. And there may have been more than one betting place. Are you saying that that was not true?

MARTIN: That operation was within three buildings of our location, and I didn't even know that it was going on until they had been raided and the whole

MARTIN: thing was over.

WBP: It was not a public nuisance, you're saying?

MARTIN: Yeah. The people that operated that were from out of town. They were not Terre Hauteans. There may have been some Terre Hauteans connected with it, but if there was, I was not . . . I didn't know anybody (and I knew a lot of people around Terre Haute particularly in the . . . maybe not in that particular field). But these people moved into Terre Haute; they rented a space; put in maybe 20 or 30 telephones; they conducted their business all by telephone. There was no traffic in and out. And we were . . . I think the space was two buildings west or three buildings west and none of the merchants right around that area knew what was going on up there. And it was that kind of an operation. That could have been done in Indianapolis or anyplace else. It was not a local talent type of thing.

WBP: In other words, you don't know of any kind of local politicians who were involved in allowing that to occur?

MARTIN: Well, not of my own knowledge. There were several operations. They were peanut operations in my estimation, but I think there were one or two semi-private clubs that carried on gambling operations but . . .

WBP: Was one of them located above what would later become the Simplex Shoe /Repair/ Store just south of the Merchants National Bank? Was it across the alley south?

MARTIN: I had heard rumors that were something of that sort. There was another one down, oh, on South 8th Street or South 9th Street upstairs. But people that were looking for that sort of thing could find it. But the people that are, you know, the average citizen, they went on, and they didn't even notice.



WBP: Sure.

MARTIN: Now, in the very early days, in the heyday of Terre Haute as a mine town there was a very large so-called red light district, which is kind of natural in that time . . . that kind of a situation.

WBP: Terre Haute had a large working-class population.

MARTIN: Yes, a large working-class population; and this was characteristic of those times and not peculiar to Terre Haute. It was a general situation. Everyplace that they had a large situation of that type of working people, they had the red light districts; and there were an unusual number of saloons located on Wabash Avenue. Incidentally, it wasn't called Wabash Avenue until some time later. That was Main Street.

WBP: Main Street.

Do you have any idea of how many saloons per block or I mean total number?

MARTIN: Well, there must be accurate figures on that, but I would say from the Wabash River to, oh, 10th Street I would imagine there were probably 20 or 30.

WBP: Uh-huh.

MARTIN: Operating, oh, saloons . . . combination saloon and restaurants and this sort of thing. But . . .

WBP: What about the red light district to your knowledge -- and you may not have very much -- but was there outside money associated with that as well? Perhaps being operated by outsiders?

MARTIN: I never heard very much about it. I'm pretty much of the opinion that it was strictly . . . you might say, strictly local talent.

WBP: Uh huh. Uh huh.

MARTIN: I know a little later there was a story appearing in the newspaper that one of the ladies came from Indianapolis /and/ tried to locate in that area up there. And she wasn't here a day or two until the police run her in and were really rough on her. And she went back to Indianapolis, and she said she didn't want any more to do with Terre Haute.

WBP: That would indicate then that the city hall pretty much knew what was happening up there and everything was under control.

MARTIN: Oh, more or less. Now, this was after the miner heyday. I don't know what the situation was. I think very likely that Donn Roberts probably had a finger in the pie someplace or other. But this, as I say, that Donn Roberts thing -- I was only four or five years old.

WBP: Well, of course, the red light district extended from the 19th century all the way up into the 20th century until the administration of Leland Larrison. There were still some houses under his administration up in that area.

MARTIN: Yes, I think that's right.

WBP: . . . so, of course, the man who served as mayor the longest time during that period would be Ralph Tucker. Do you have any sense of Ralph Tucker's administration and the extent to which he might have known what was going on and had anything to do with it?

MARTIN: Well, that's possible. I know there was a lot of talk. I knew Ralph very well, but I never personally saw anything which would indicate that. I think during several of the administrations it was held to a minimum; and I don't think they were actually licensed, but I do know they were inspected, which was a good thing. And there was a lot of talk about clearing out the red light district. Well,

MARTIN: that's all right in theory, but this sort of thing is going to happen.

WBP: The world's oldest profession, huh?

MARTIN: It's the world's oldest profession, and it's going to happen and perhaps it's better to have it in a locale like that which was down pretty much out of the way than to have it spread all over town.

WBP: It's something like . . . it's a little bit like illegal liquor during Prohibition. People are going to have liquor anyway. If you prohibit it, it simply drives it underground and makes everybody . . .

MARTIN: Speakeasies and the bootleggers.

WBP: And that was something else that was associated with the working class nature of the community, wasn't it?

MARTIN: Yes. During Prohibition they had quite a few raids by the "revenueurs," they called them. I guess it's the income tax department that was really operating the liquor control, because legalized liquor was taxed. And so the revenue department had charge of doing away with all the illegal alcohol sources which included everything during the Prohibition. But the revenueurs . . . the government men would come in and locate the still and get the evidence they needed, and then they'd go in and chop the stills to pieces and . . .

WBP: Would you say there were a lot of stills during the Prohibition period?

MARTIN: Well, an appreciable number up in the area around Blanford and up in that area, which, incidentally, was kind of a hangover . . . or there was a lot of miners up in that area, laboring people. But there were also a lot of foreigners and the

MARTIN: Italians and . . . a lot of Italians in the Clinton district, Little Italy. Back in those days they were called "wops" and "dagoes." You go up to Clinton now, and you don't rank in the society at all unless you can trace some degree of Italian blood in your ancestry. They're proud of it and which they might very well be.

But the foreign element did . . . they wanted their liquor, and they had it. I photographed one up there, quite a large installation that was in a basement which had been built under a large chicken house. They had raised chickens which gave them reason to drive trucks in there to unload feed, but they also unloaded their principal product which was distilled in the basement.

WBP: I see.

MARTIN: There was one in that general area up there . . . we were up there. The revenueurs went in in the morning, and they had mash tanks in a big barn that ran clear from the floor of the barn clear up through the hayloft -- big mash vats. And they went in and chopped the vats open and all of the mash ran out into a pig lot that was out back of the barn, and the pigs were delighted.

WBP: I bet!

MARTIN: When I got there in the middle of the afternoon, you never saw so many happy pigs . . .

WBP: Aha ha ha!

MARTIN: . . . in your life! They were lying around, gruntin' and groanin' and . . .

WBP: Yes, yes. I bet.

(both laugh heartily)

MARTIN: Stoned, stoned to the gills!

WBP: I bet. Ha.

Most interviews when they deal with this aspect of Terre Haute's history also talk a little bit about the possibility of organized crime -- of figures at least coming down through this area temporarily. Do you know anything about that?

MARTIN: Oh, I heard rumors to that effect, but I don't know. I don't . . . I didn't see anything in our local labor unions that would indicate that kind of a connection. I knew . . . I had lots of friends in . . . officers and so forth in labor unions, people who lived in Terre Haute. They were honest, outstanding citizens.

WBP: So that you didn't see labor racketeering then?

MARTIN: No. I didn't see any labor racketeering at all.

WBP: And did you see any gangster influence in the . . . during the Prohibition period and perhaps illegal liquor, running illegal liquor?

MARTIN: Well, there must surely have been. A lot of the liquor was manufactured here and was hauled out by the truckloads someplace else. It was not probably for local consumption.

WBP: So, there may have been some.

MARTIN: So, there may have been some, but it was very much under cover. I don't know. In the overall scene the news media . . . well, you can't blame the news media. The news media have a product to sell. They sell what the public wants. And the spectacular is what the reading public seems to buy. The good things in the community which far outnumber the other aspects of it, the good things go unnoticed and unpublicized while the little spectacular . . . that's not the word. You used the word a while ago.

WBP: Sensational.

MARTIN: Sensational.

WBP: Newspapers like to sensationalize.

MARTIN: The sensational. Well, newspapers like it because that's what the public buys.

WBP: Sure.

MARTIN: You can put it that way.

WBP: Yes. There are a number of different things that were going on in Terre Haute or which had gone on which tended to interfere with the good image of the city though . . .

MARTIN: Right.

WBP: . . . and no doubt made it hard to sell to a potential employer, industry which might move in here. It made it more difficult to sell Terre Haute as a good place to locate. And that's why it's important to look at some of these things. Apparently there was a live-and-let live attitude on the part of the local citizens about the gambling and the prostitution and illegal liquor. And it didn't necessarily interfere at all with having a good life, cultured and dignified life in Terre Haute -- the presence of these other elements. It was a working-class city, and these elements went along with it.

MARTIN: Yes. Oh, I don't know what the figures are, but we must have a hundred churches in Terre Haute. Some very fine ones, some very good churches of all denominations, and I think our school system . . . . I have worked very closely with the school system in Terre Haute, and I think it has been very well managed by some very capable people. And, of course, there's always somebody complaining about something or other, but I think in general the school . . . I mean the local school system -- like the high schools and grade schools and so forth -- and our educational

MARTIN. system -- including the two universities and Ivy Tech and St. Mary's and so forth -- this is certainly far superior to towns much larger than Terre Haute. And so, it's just a matter of where they place their emphasis. But the point you're making . . . I know the point you're making is that there's something wrong. There has been something wrong; why Terre Haute didn't grow like it should have and I don't know the answer to it. I don't know why. I suppose it's a combination of a lot of things.

WBP: Briefly, could you mention a little bit about Tony Hulman's activities in the community, his role as a leader, civic leader?

MARTIN: Well, Tony, when he first became active in the business down there, he was fairly inactive in civic affairs. But when he became active in the business, I think his first big duty in connection with the Hulman & Company, which did a lot of manufacturing as well as wholesaling groceries . . . . They manufactured Clabber Girl baking powder, and they roasted their own coffee beans and put out Rex and Good Morning coffee and several others -- which was good coffee. (The downtown district in Terre Haute smelled wonderful when they were roasting coffee.) But Tony's first job, first duty there, his father put him in charge of promoting Clabber Girl baking powder, and he hired and put out quite a number of crews with cars to travel all over the United States and put out Clabber Girl baking powder signs. I even run into one clear up in Alaska on one of the by-roads way out. There are not very many signs of any kind up in that country, and I ran into a Clabber Girl baking powder one.

WBP: Amazing!

MARTIN: Made me kinda' feel at home.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: But all out through the west they just blanketed the . . . and Tony made an outstanding success of the promotion of the baking powder. And, of course, that business went by the board when they started packaging cake mixes and the Bisquicks. And this type of thing reduced the market for baking powder because it was incorporated in the quick foods.

WBP: Yes, but it's still being produced right today.

MARTIN: Yes, it's still a good baking powder. But . . .

WBP: He also . . . Tony would also purchase the 500-Mile race track and would establish himself as a major promotor of automobile racing. So it seems to me that he probably had considerable promotional ability.

MARTIN: He did. I don't know, it has to be promotional ability. It just seemed like everything he touched . . . like the Midas touch /turned to gold/. But things don't just happen that way. But at the time that Tony bought the race track, it was bankrupt. People could not understand how come it was ever allowed to operate as long as it did. And if Tony hadn't have bought it, it would have gone into bankruptcy, and the thing would have gone to pieces. But Tony purchased it, took it over with an enormous debt; and for, oh, at least ten or twelve years, he put a lot of money into it and never took a dime out. I mean it was not a . . . for years it was not a paying investment. I don't know whether it ever has been or not, but he did everything he could to build the place up and to promote it.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 2-SIDE 2

MARTIN: Yes, we were talking about Tony Hulman over at the race track. But he did a marvelous job of building up the facility and put quite a bit of



MARTIN: money into it, reinvested all the proceeds from it. And it may have been, like other things, the opportunities taken when the time is right -- the forward moving of the automobile industry, the interest of the general public in racing and so forth. Oh, it may have had some influence on it, but it took some very good management to do that, too.

One little incident that I think I'd like to inject here -- I went over to Indianapolis each year and photographed for the newspaper groups in the grandstands of Terre Haute people who were . . . oh, industries around Terre Haute would buy a whole block, take a section in the grandstand. The roto-gravure section survived on names and faces, and this was good for material for that. But I went over there. I was there the first year that Tony took it over. And I usually went there about 3:30 in the morning because at 4 o'clock they fired the cannon and opened the gates, and people all rushed in and parked in the infield. They don't do that any more. But people rushed in, and so I'd always go ahead. I had a special press pass, and I'd go around and park back of the pagoda. And that year I was there. It was about, oh, ten minutes 'til four, I guess. And Tony . . . I had wandered over toward the pagoda. Tony come riding in on the back of a three-wheeled security motorcycle. And he came riding up; and he saw me, and he said, "Come on, Martin. Let's go up in the fire tower." And he said, "I want to be up there when they fire the opening gun."

So, nobody, but nobody got into the fire tower. But Tony could, and I was privileged to be with him when they opened the gates and saw the cars come in like ants at a picnic. But Tony was telling me that he had been at Indianapolis over at the hotel and when he got up and dressed to come to the race track early that morning, he had changed suits, and he forgot to bring his credentials. And he got to the front gate, you know, and he told the guard it was all right, he was Tony Hulman. And the guard said,

MARTIN: "Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's right and I'm the King of England, too!"

WBP: Ha, ha!

MARTIN: Tony talked to him; and the guard finally got pretty huffy, and he said, "I don't care who you are. No one, but no one gets past these gates without the proper credentials."

WBP: Uh huh.

MARTIN: But Tony talked to him a little bit; and the guard finally said, "Well, I'll call Joe Quinn, who is pretty much in charge of this area" -- which he did. And, of course, Joe came right over and identified Tony; and it was getting pretty close to opening time, so they went on in. But Tony said, "I had one hell of a time gettin' into this place!" (laughs)

But later, Tony . . . I learned that Tony went back over and found that guard and commended him for doing his duty, for doing what . . . Tony was that kind of a guy.

WBP: He was a good manager.

MARTIN: Yes. He was a . . . well, it was just the right thing to do.

WBP: Did he promote Terre Haute as much as he could have?

MARTIN: Well, I don't know. He held some influential positions outside of Terre Haute and Indianapolis. I know he owned a big office building over in Dayton, Ohio. But a good many of his holdings were around here. The Hulmans owned a number of buildings up and down Wabash Avenue, which . . . I think the Blumbergs later became one of the big property owners on Wabash Avenue. We paid the Blumbergs and

MARTIN: their heirs rent for 70 years.

WBP: (laughs)

MARTIN: We could have purchased the building several times.

WBP: Yes.

MARTIN: But anyway . . .

WBP: They would have . . . the Hulmans and the Blumbergs would both have considerable to gain, I suppose, if Terre Haute prospered economically or to lose if it did not. Would you say that they probably were relatively satisfied with the way things were?

MARTIN: Probably.

WBP: You had no reason to think they weren't?

MARTIN: No.

I don't think they did any great amount of promotion along that line. I really don't know how much property they own down Wabash Avenue.

WBP: Were either one of the families involved in politics at all?

MARTIN: Well, not to any great extent. Tony was . . . he was quite active in the bond sales and that sort of thing. Now this . . .

WBP: You're talking about war bonds?

MARTIN: War bonds, yes. War bonds. Savings bonds and so forth.

WBP: He was president . . . or, executive director or president of the Chamber of Commerce for a while.

MARTIN: Yes, he was. And he was head of the Indiana State flood control board, which I think was an appointment -- probably a dollar a year job, I don't know. But he was head of that, and he did quite a number of civic things.

WBP: All right. Is there anything else you want to say about him or his personality?

MARTIN: Well, personally I liked Tony very much. He was not a person to seek publicity. He would go along with publicity activities when it was for a worthy cause. He was generally a mild-mannered man but if the occasion arose, he could stand his ground very effectively. He was inclined to be modest, possibly even a little timid. But he was a man that would do what had to be done for a worthy cause. Many times when he really would much prefer not doing it. I give him credit for that.

WBP: Um hm.

Let's look at downtown. You say downtown began to . . . it was in its heyday up through the '20s.

MARTIN: Yes, I would say so.

WBP: Up through World War II, I think you said even. Right? Up through World War II?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: And then after World War II, you began to see some signs of decline?

MARTIN: Yes. I think a lot of this was because of the situation with the automobile. And this happened not only in Terre Haute. I think Terre Haute was quite typical of what happened in a lot of other towns. Richmond, Indiana, had the same problem. Evansville, Indiana. Towns all over the country. I mean it was . . . it was a trend.

MARTIN: The automobile had a great deal to do with it, because people didn't have to get on the streetcar to the downtown area to shop. Any time they wanted to shop, they could go downtown where they had trouble parking or they could go . . . . So, it was favorable to establish shopping areas away from the higher . . . it was attractive for the merchants to get out of the high-rent district where they could get much more space at a much less cost. And it was attractive to people to . . . . The Meadows Shopping Center was the first one in Terre Haute, and it was attractive to go out there where, as they advertised, there were acres and acres of free parking space. And this was an attractive thing. So, it was just a trend all over the country. And the big shopping centers, they moved out from the downtown.

But there was a situation here -- I assume it may have happened other places, too -- that through the years the downtown area, which in the case of Terre Haute I think was a little unique, it was a little more . . . we just had one real compact downtown district. Out of that there wasn't much. There was a little . . . a little shopping area up at Twelve Points and a little one down around 7th and Hulman Street. But by and large, the downtown district was it. And that area was paying a high percentage of the taxes -- high taxes. And the merchants could pay it because they were getting the business. But as soon as the business started going down, it would seem that the city government could have seen fit to reduce the taxes in that area gradually to allow it to survive. But they didn't! The taxes remained high, and good buildings . . . the Sears building was demolished simply to relieve the company of the burden of paying taxes on it. It was a good building. It was built so solidly that they had a terrible time bringing it down. It was steel and reinforced concrete, and it was one of the best buildings on Wabash Avenue. But the same thing that the . . . the Sears building, Penney's building, the . . . well, that whole block in there which would

MARTIN: amount to almost a half a city block, that whole area in there is now a parking lot. And the Terre Haute House, the taxes on the Terre Haute House even yet are terrific! I think . . . if I'm not mistaken, the figure that I heard was \$450 a month in taxes, which they paid even after the hotel ceased to operate as a hotel.

Of course, an uptown hotel was also brought about by the automobile situation because, oh, as early as 1920 and '21 tourism was beginning. And people began to travel in families, and it was much more convenient. The first thing to replace the hotel was called the tourist camp. And that's what it was. The traveling families in their Model-T Fords carried their own tents, and they set it up. They did their own cooking. There were no restaurants catering to traveling . . . that kind of traveling people.

And these tourist camps sprung up all over the country, more so in the west than in the east. Then after the tourist camp came the tourist court. On trips I stayed first in camps, then in courts. In courts they had little individual wooden buildings, just about as big as a bedroom. They'd have two beds, three beds, four beds. Generally the building wasn't even lined, and you could go in and get a tourist cottage for a dollar. A dollar was the standard rate, and if you had a big family . . . . But a family of four could stay in the cottage overnight, and they could drive right up and unload their stuff and get right back in the car. They didn't have to clean up and go into a hotel. It was so much more convenient.

WBP: Sure.

MARTIN: But the tourism grew on that. The first time I ever heard any mention made of a motel, somebody had been on a trip someplace or other and they stayed in a place that they called a motel -- a cross between . . . well, a motor hotel. It was a motel.

WBP: Um hm. That's right.

MARTIN: That's the first time I'd ever heard of it.

WBP: In the early '50s, I suppose?

MARTIN: No. No, I think that was around . . . I heard of a motel in 1927 . . .

WBP: Oh, you did?

MARTIN: . . . that this happened. But the automobile . . . the '20s, that decade was a great year for the expansion of automobiles. Several reasons involved there. The World War production of war equipment -- trucks and so forth -- built up huge manufacturing set-ups, and it was rather easy for them to go into the manufacture of automobiles.

WBP: Sure.

MARTIN: And there were, oh, during the '20s there were possible, oh, at least 50 -- and a hundred probably wouldn't be too high -- different companies manufacturing automobiles. And they sold automobiles like mad.

Henry Ford came out with the Model-T about 1916, I think. First ride I ever took in an automobile was in a 1916 auto with a beautiful brass radiator. A touring car, open on the sides. The first car that the family ever owned . . . my brother bought a 1923 Ford touring car. The price of the Fords . . . there was one model of the Ford around that time that you could buy for \$290. I think the one that he got . . . oh, it was a little better one, I think, and it cost about \$400. But we made a trip clear to the east coast, clear to Connecticut in that car. And we carried our own tents, set up every night, and we could travel . . . with the price of gasoline and so forth, we could travel for less than a cent a mile.

WBP: To go back to the downtown area, would you say that over the years people had gotten tired of having all the problem of going down and trying to find a place to park and in fact their attitude toward downtown may have been one of . . . well, not very favorable by the time the interstate came through. And so that they were delighted not to have to go downtown any more.

MARTIN: I think that's right. Yes.

WBP: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but . . .

MARTIN: No, I think that's a hundred percent right. They put in parking meters, and that kind of irritated people to have to put a nickel in the slot to park in the downtown area. Of course, the argument for that was that if they didn't have the parking meter, there wouldn't be any parking spaces anywhere.

But I don't know. The pros and cons on that were many, but I don't think the parking meter really helped it.

WBP: You know what you're telling me though? You're telling me that it wasn't just the forces of technological and economic change in this nation, the movement of people to the automobiles and building interstates and the building of suburban shopping malls that caused the decline of downtown completely. It was also caused by the lack or failure of local government to adapt to the changes by changing the tax rates and by making life easier for people who wanted to come downtown instead of more difficult.

MARTIN: Well, that's true. And the local merchants were not blameless in this either. After all, who is the city government? Who is the government? It's the people.

WBP: Yes.



MARTIN: And the . . .

WBP: Did you say . . . are you telling me that there was a lack of understanding of what it . . .

MARTIN: Of what was going on . . . what was going on. I think that's true.

WBP: Did they have a . . .

MARTIN: The landlords couldn't reduce the rent. They didn't want to anyway but they really . . . they had the excuse that they couldn't because the taxes were so high. And even people that . . . I don't know, I think probably Sears, Roebuck owned their own building. So it wasn't a matter of the landlord charging the money; it was the matter of that they couldn't afford to pay the taxes and make a profit.

WBP: What about absentee landlordism? Wasn't there a certain amount of that, people living out of town and not paying much attention to what was going on?

MARTIN: Not too much. Now, The Root Store was owned and operated . . . the Root Store was operated by a company from the east out of New York City, I think. And, of course, there's Sears and Montgomery Ward's and J. C. Penney's . . .

WBP: Those are all national chains, Kresge's, Woolworth's . . .

MARTIN: Yes, Kresge's, Woolworth's, McCrory's (three of the dime stores) and one other on the . . . well, they called it a "dollar store." But all right in that one block between 6th Street and 7th Street. And, of course, they were operated by chains.

WBP: So, only their manager, who was the resident manager, would have much interest in the long-term welfare of the downtown area?

MARTIN: That's right.

WBP: As a source of economics, profits?

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: And so, that might have been a factor there?

MARTIN: The Herz department store was one of the big ones earlier, before Sears and Ward's and so forth came in. It was locally owned. It was owned by the Herz family. And later, when the changes were taking place, the Herz interests sold out to the Alden . . . which was a chain like Sears.

WBP: I've heard of two criticisms about Terre Haute people which may have resulted in a failure to be progressive or responsive to these changes.

One criticism is that there's a vast amount of public apathy toward civic affairs. Another charge is that there is a lack of teamwork, lack of cooperation among the downtown businessmen in lobbying for, if you will, their own interests, such as free parking or lower tax rates.

MARTIN: I think you're right on both counts.

WBP: Oh, really?

MARTIN: I think the people of Terre Haute were guilty on both the counts.

WBP: Not that it would have made that much difference in the long run. I assume . . . I have the feeling the shopping centers would have gone in anyway.

MARTIN: Yes.

WBP: But it might not have been so devastating, and it might have been a more healthy change. We might have been able to save some of the downtown and keep it a viable retailing center as well.

MARTIN: I didn't at the time know very much about it. But they said that there was a group of outside capital wanted to buy two or three blocks of the downtown district and convert it to a modern-type shopping center, and . . .

WBP: When was that?

MARTIN: Well, I think one of the other persons being interviewed mentioned that. And I was not aware that that had happened up until just quite recently. But there has always . . . I don't know, there's been a reluctance toward change in Terre Haute. This could be due to the property owners. The businesses that were established on Wabash Avenue were indifferent to what was going on. They hoped that things would go on as they were and maybe turned their backs on the idea that they weren't going to be that way. So, that's part of it. I think apathy had a strong effect on it. And I'm sure personal leaders, some of the landowners and so forth could have affected it. Lack of cooperation. I think you're right on that count, too. I don't know. It just seemed like they never could get the people of the downtown district to work together very well.

WBP: Um hm.

Well, this has been a delightful interview experience for me. This has been much richer than I had realized, and I just am delighted with it. Is there anything you'd like to say before we close the interview?

MARTIN: Well, I personally like Terre Haute very much. Maybe because I'm just a smalltown boy at heart because I was born here, raised here, but not altogether. I've worked other places. I've worked a short time in New York. I worked several summers in Chicago, and I decided that the big towns were not for me.

But the people of Terre Haute are friendly,

MARTIN: interesting when you get to know them. And my job as a press photographer made it possible -- in fact even required -- that I be in touch with people from all walks of life. I mean important dignitaries, visiting dignitaries, important people, professional men, public officials, educators, and people from all areas. And I find that when you get to know them, they all have some interesting things to contribute. And I have almost never met a person that I genuinely disliked when I got to know him. This has been what I would consider one of the benefits of my job -- the ability to contact so many different types of people. Even in the criminal area. I have photographed and interviewed convicted criminals, murderers, thieves. It's been my job to go into the jail cell and talk to these people sometimes. And the thing . . . even those are interesting. So, it's just one of those things. A lot of people run down Terre Haute, but I like it.

WBP: Good. Good.

Thank you very much, Mr. Martin. It was a delightful interview.

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